

Dear Dr. Adams and members of the Instructional Quality Commission,

My name is Dr. Anantanand Rambachan and I'm a professor of religion at St. Olaf College in Minnesota, an advisor to the Pluralism Project at Harvard University and an interfaith advisor to the Tony Blair Faith Foundation. I am writing in reference to the proposed history and social science frameworks.

I am writing to commend the work of the commission in incorporating the feedback of many voices in the current draft of the narratives. However, there are still some areas that need to be improved.

First, in lines 879-881 of the grade 6 narrative reads: "The teacher has students draw a social hierarchy pyramid of the varnas and compare with the Mesopotamian social hierarchy pyramid they made earlier." What makes this statement problematic and inaccurate is that it assumes that the varnas were always organized and frozen as a social hierarchy and thus accurately represented as a pyramid. Instead, the jati system (which the narrative highlights earlier) is what developed into a social hierarchy. The statement made in lines 879-881 inadvertently conflates the varnas and jatis, and I urge the commission to revise the statement.

Secondly, in lines 1543-1546, the draft reads that "Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak, a social reformer who challenged the authority of the Brahmins and the Hindu caste order." The statement is problematic on two fronts. First, it assumes that Brahmins exercised uniform authority over all Hindus. The Bhakti movement, two centuries earlier, championed personal religious freedom and the love of God without the need for a priestly intermediary. Second, it conveys the impression that caste is intrinsic and overlooks the fact that it was also challenged and contested historically. I would urge a revision that emphasizes Guru Nanak's importance and the rise of Sikhism without inaccurately depicting the Hindus and the Hindu tradition.

Lastly, lines 1553-54, conveys the impression that Hindus, as a group, were not persecuted by the Mughals. I urge the commission to re-word line 1554 to read: "persecuted Sikhs and Hindus."

These recommendations are grounded in scholarly concerns, and I urge the commission to review and consider.

You may contact me for more information if you wish.

Thank you in advance,

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